(b) whether the upgradation was to have been completed by September, 2001 and whether due to delays the completion has been re-scheduled to March, 2004;

(c) whether due to delays in the upgradation process the Airforce is being compelled to use the ageing MIG Bis aircraft; and

(d) whether the technical life of MIG Bis fleet was required to be extended and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As per the original plan, the upgradation work was to be completed by December, 2001. Due to delays in the programme, the upgradation work is planned to be completed by the financial year 2004-2005.

(c) The issue of ageing is not directly related to the upgrade of the Aircraft.

(d) Tests are in hand for increasing the technical life of the Aircraft.

Use of Defence Aircraft by Chief Ministers

2470. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Central Government allot Defence Aircraft for use by State Chief Minister;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Chief Minister of Kerala use Defence Aircraft; and

(d) if so, the details regarding payment for using the Defence Aircraft, by the Chief Ministers of States?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir; such airlifts are provided after approval of the competent authority.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) No dues are pending against any Chief Minister.

Venkataswami Commission

2471. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the date on which the Venkataswami Commission was set up to probe into Tehclka tapes on the defence purchases;

(b) the details of the work done by the Commission;

(c) whether Government have granted any extension to the Commission and if so, when its present term is scheduled to terminate; and

(d) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item, "Tehelka probe panel may wind up" appearing in the Statesman dated the 25th October, 2001 and if so, the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) (a) Justice K. Venkataswami Commission of Inquiry was set up on 24.3.2001.

(b) and (c) The work of the Commission is under way and its hearings arc in progress. Government have granted extension of the time to Justice K. Venkataswami Commission of Inquiry upto 23.3.2002 to complete its work.

(d) Yes, Sir. As stated in the reply to parts (b) an/1 (c) of this Question, the Government has already granted extension of time till 23.3.2002 to complete its work.